



PacFacts



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Philippine partnership



PACDIV, Seabees building Philippine runway

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Graining and teamwork are not only important in sports, they are essential when fighting or preparing for war. So, when the U.S. Pacific Command (PACOM) requested Navy engineering expertise to improve a runway at Ft. Magsaysay in the Philippines for an upcoming military exercise, our Contingency Engineering (CE) Dept. started putting together a plan of action.

First, CE developed an architect/engineer scope of work and issued a task order out of our Regional Officer

in Charge of Construction (ROICC) Thailand office, which picked a Philippine company to design the project.

"We sent over reservists in 2000 to do a feasibility study to improve the runway. As project funding looked more promising, we worked with PACOM," said Jay Lutz, PACDIV contingency engineer.

The 170-day project is also the first part of exercise Balikatan '04, during which U.S. and Philippine forces will combine to finish the airfield at

Magsaysay, construct a three-room school building, and perform command post and field training exercises. The main reason for rebuilding the airport is to support the annual Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS)-sponsored Balikatan exercise.

"This airport is being built by American and Philippine military," said Philippines President, Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo. "This airport will be used not only by soldiers, but also

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Project brings engineering, construction success

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by passengers and products of Nueva Ecija. This is one way to create more jobs here. This airport will move the north and east of Nueva Ecija closer to trade and industry. Jobs will increase and to make it even better, we will match it with a pier in Dingalan.”

Also included on this amazing team constructing the new runway is a combined Naval Construction Task Group composed of engineers from the U.S. and Philippine Navy Seabees, the Philippine Army, and Guam’s National Guard and Air National Guard. Once completed, the airfield will be able to accommodate large C-130 cargo aircraft.

With the new runway, forces can be deployed on C-130s from Okinawa, Guam and other locations to Magsaysay, now a four-hour drive from Manila, where almost everyone flies into the country. “That will minimize the current transportation costs once you get on the ground,” added Lutz. “The airfield will also improve the force protection posture by flying directly into a secure base.”

Lutz and another PACDIV contingency engineer, Steve Kelley,

have worked on the project actively over the past year. “We made four site survey trips there and talked with the Seabees, the contractor in the ERC (exercise related construction) project, to make sure they understand their requirements,” Lutz explained. Aided by Lt. Tim Allen of ROICC

“It’s a give and take relationship – we can help the U.S., and they help us, especially in training.”

Thailand and Ayub Hassan at ROICC Singapore, PACDIV will continue to support the construction project with quality assurance.

“We handled the design, and now we’re working alongside the Seabees. We’re the executive agent, so we’re responsible to PACOM to give them a completed runway,” Lutz added.

Lutz said the runway has advantages for the host nation. The Philippines will use the airfield when not occupied by American forces, and may open the facility to the

surrounding community, helping the local economy.

The \$600,000 project is being funded by the PACOM to reconstruct the deteriorated and unusable airfield, located in Nueva Ecija Province. “It’s really a \$2 million project,” said Guam National Guard Adjutant Gen. Robert Cockey, noting that the other \$1.4 million would normally be spent on labor. This runway will certainly help make Philippine Special Forces more deployable.”

“We need to emphasize that we, the U.S., are getting great training out of this project,” said Cmdr. Gerald Job, PACOM Action Officer. “Runway training projects are few and far between. Typically, most ERC work for Seabees is vertical-type construction. ERC, the program that the project is funded under, can only be used for Joint Chiefs of Staff-sponsored exercises,” said Job.

According to U.S. Embassy Chargé d’Affaires Joseph Mussomeli, the repair of Ft. Magsaysay’s runway is the largest joint military exercise-related construction project that the U.S. Pacific Command has ever done.

“Our Seabees are very receptive to the training,” said Commodore Margarinto Sanchez, Jr., Commander, Philippine Naval Construction Brigade (Seabees). “It’s a give and take relationship – we can help the U.S., and they help us, especially in training.”

U.S. Navy Reserve Seabees are also taking advantage of the project. “This is a great opportunity for our Reserve forces to work on a project this size,” said Capt. Joseph Furco, Commander, Ninth Naval Construction Regiment.

Training and teamwork: two required ingredients when fighting or preparing for war. When completed, the runway project will have taken place because of the outstanding engineering and construction teams that rose to the occasion to make it happen.



AIRFIELD CONSTRUCTION - A loader and dump truck operate with a bulldozer in the background excavating the American and Philippine-built air strip. (Photos by Jay Lutz)